



# **BIG PINE KEY/US 1 CORRIDOR AREA ENHANCEMENT PLAN**

**COUNTY OF MONROE  
GROWTH MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

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theHOKPlanningGroup  
NEW URBAN STUDIO



**This document is based on the principles of New Urbanism, as stated in the “Charter for the New Urbanism”, which elevates the status of the public realm, seeks to establish responsible development and strives to build a better environment for the community of Big Pine Key.**

HOK Planning Group, New Urban Studio

# COUNTY OF MONROE

## Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

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Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

Overview of the Community of Big Pine Key

Named for its extensive pine forests, Big Pine Key is one of the many islands that comprise the Florida Keys. It located between Mile Marker (MM) 33 and 29.5 and is generally recognized as the gateway to the Lower Keys. Big Pine Key is a diverse and vibrant community, comprising a diverse mix of restaurants, shops, offices, community facilities, conservation areas and residences. Including residents from No Name Key, the local population comprises some 5,000 persons, and increases to over 8,000 in the winter season.

US 1 runs from east to west through the lower portion of the island. It is the sole thoroughfare that links Big Pine Key to the mainland to the north (via the eastern end) and the rest of the Lower Keys to the south (via the southern end). In addition, most of the more intense land uses (e.g. commercial and office) line the roadway, which also serves as the local "Main Street" for 'downtown' Big Pine Key. The corridor is therefore subject to a mix of heavy through traffic and its associated uses as well as local businesses and circulation.

Over fifty percent of the land area of Big Pine Key is in public ownership. These include areas designated as conservation areas and wildlife reserves, such as the National Key Deer Refuge, the National Great White Heron Refuge and Coupon Bight State Aquatic Preserve. While several tracts along the US 1 Corridor have been designated as conservation lands, designated parks and other spaces for public and civic use are infrequent, not clearly defined nor developed.

Habitat conservation measures have limited the scope for road improvements on US 1. Unfortunately, without these service level capacity improvements, additional development along the corridor becomes unsustainable. This moratorium has resulted in disincentives not only for new development but also for redevelopment or enhancement of existing properties along US 1.

The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan - Vision Plan and Design Guidelines

The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan (the Study) examines opportunities for establishing a consistent look and feel for the section of US 1 within Big Pine Key, enhancing its sense of place, resolving traffic issues (including through traffic, local vehicular traffic, bicycle movement) and advancing the pedestrian realm. The Study seeks to develop methods for creating a distinctive image for the corridor. This includes examining means for improving the service levels and circulation efficiencies of US 1, thereby creating incentives for redevelopment/new development and opportunities for providing a physical focus for the Big Pine Key community along this corridor. These opportunities are consolidated into a unified strategy, embodied in the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Vision Plan. The Vision Plan is a single illustrative color plan identifying the boundaries, significant landscape elements, improvements to rights-of-way, parking, proposed development interventions, schematic building locations and development envelopes and uses.

This Plan is accompanied by Design Guidelines encompassing Urban, Architecture and Landscape/Streetscape. These three elements have the most direct effect on the public realm at the human scale. The simple codification of these elements will help establish the Big Pine Key/US 1 corridor as a unique and identifiable place and provide direction for future development/redevelopment toward a safe, human environment of variety, activity and opportunity.

The Guidelines offer an easy-to-use, concise and effective set of guidelines that describe the desired future form of the US 1 corridor. To that end, the standards are divided into sections or zones of character and development intensity, managed by a single Regulating Plan.

The Principles and the Process

The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Vision Plan is based on the following tenets:

1. The promotion of Diverse Development;
2. The provision of a well-defined Thoroughfare Network that promotes the equitable treatment of pedestrians and vehicles;
3. The creation of Neighborhoods that have clear and active centers that provide opportunities for commerce, culture and governance;
4. The elevation of the Public Realm; and
5. The clear delineation of the Street as reinforced by the built environment.

Guided by the above principles, the following development issues were examined:

- Community development that is diverse, compact, walkable and safe;
- The neighborhood unit as the basic increment of development, with neighborhood size determined by the pedestrian shed;
- The integration of various uses within the neighborhood and increased flexibility for some additional development, whilst maintaining Big Pine Key's unique, rural/suburban quality;
- Coordination of the Vision Plan with FDOT proposals, including the Scenic Byway Program; Overseas Heritage Trail; Bike Path and Landscape improvements; gateways, signage and overall image; and
- The protection of landscape areas that are ecologically and culturally significant.

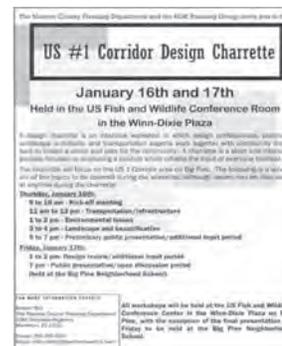
The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan Charrette - on January 16 and 17, 2003 - was held at the US Fish and Wildlife Conference Room, Winn-Dixie Plaza, a few yards north of the intersection of US 1/Overseas Highway and Key Deer Boulevard. Though conducted only over two days, the charrette was organized with the following typical activities:

- Listening Sessions: Public workshops, stakeholder work sessions, and drop-in sessions for building a shared understanding of challenges, opportunities, expectations and ideas;
- Design Workshops: Throughout the charrette, planners and designers quickly generated design and development alternatives, immediately responding to the ideas and information gained through the listening sessions.
- Review Sessions: Drop-in sessions and public presentations provided opportunities for the community to review and respond to ideas and proposals.

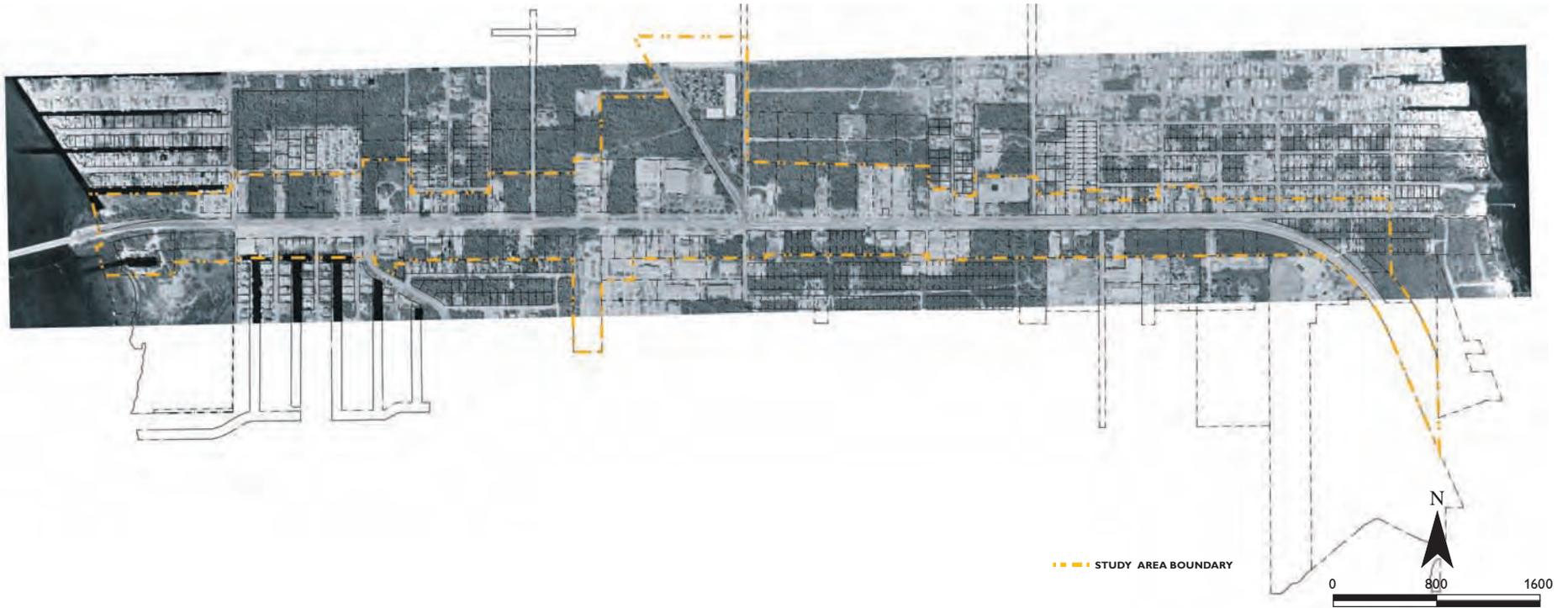
The openness of the charrette allowed input and feedback from parties that have a stake in the plan, intimate knowledge of the place and its people, and the ability to support implementation. The active engagement of community members and leaders, public officials, property owners and local merchants was intrinsic to the Process and the Plan's success.

The location in the neighborhood allowed easy access during the drop-in sessions, workshops and presentations. Over the course of the two days, residents, property owners, merchants and County consultants stopped in to share ideas and concerns, check on the Team's progress and provide real-time feedback on design and proposals.

The proposals contained herein will be included in the Livable CommuniKeys Plan for Big Pine and No Name Keys.



Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**The Study Area**

The Study Area for the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan is defined as follows:

The eastern edge is bound by the eastern approach on US 1/Overseas Highway emerging from the Key Deer habitat and overpass, including the vacant lots to the immediate north-east of the US 1 right of way. The north-eastern corner is bounded by half a block north of Avenue A and mid-block between 3rd and 4th streets;

The Study Area extends from east to west along US 1. Along this section, the Study Area and is extends to the north and south of the US 1 right of way by half a block, i.e. one lot, with the following exceptions:

- At the intersection of US 1 and Key Deer boulevard, the Study Area extends north to include the Big Pine Key shopping Center;
- The Study Area extends south to include the entire site occupied by the Flea Market (two lots deep); and

- The Study Area is bounded to the west by the island's edge on North Pine Channel. The Study Area includes the conservation lands on either side of the US 1 right of way.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**Original Big Pine Inn**  
The Big Pine Key Inn was a familiar landmark until it was destroyed by a fire in 1978; this picture was taken around 1933. The design of the building is done with clean lines, with primarily wood construction, wide overhangs and columned porches - a Florida/tropical version of the Cracker style that is found in the Lower Keys.



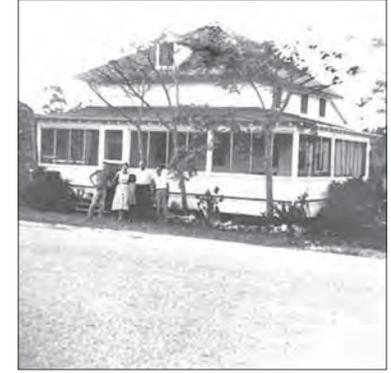
**Remodeled Big Pine Inn**  
While some permanent settling occurred in the middle 1800s (the majority was in the Middle and Upper Keys), interest in the Keys intensified only after World War II. The Big Pine Inn was repurchased and remodeled in the late 1940s/early 1950s, but much of the elements of the original structure were retained. This attests to the robustness and longevity of the original architectural character, which current and new development may aspire to.



**Big Pine Post Office, ca. 1926**  
As with the Big Pine Inn, the architectural style of the Big Pine Post Office incorporates a gable roof, clapboard siding, wide overhangs over a columned porch. Many of the original structures on Big Pine Key were of a low scale and modest proportions. They were mostly single storey structures, and seldom exceeded two. This is also true of present development.



**Big Pine Prison Farm, ca. 1957**  
The prison camp was formerly located on West Summerland Key and relocated to Big Pine Key in 1950, to the area formerly occupied by the railroad foreman's section house. Key Deer Boulevard can clearly be seen at the top of the photograph. Even with this large compound, the overall character of the area remains rural, being surrounded by natural vegetation.



**Big Pine Prison Wardens House, ca. 1957**  
Even as Big Pine Key entered the 1960s, the architectural style was still in the Keys Cracker style. This house was notable for its double hipped roofs and dormer windows, and the distinctive wrap-around porch. The Prison Farm section house was later torn down - Jerry Wilkinson would later lament the lack of interest in renovation and conservation of cultural resources.



**Maggie Atwell House**  
The older historic structures on Big Pine Key that did survive demolition were purchased in 1999 and moved to Key West. These included the Florida East Coast Railroad Depot and the Maggie Atwell house. Increased efforts are required to ensure the conservation and integrity, not just of individual historic buildings, but of the larger overall development fabric and scale of Big Pine Key.



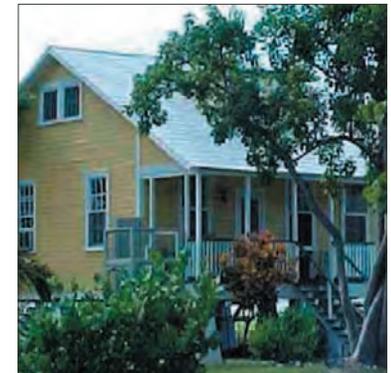
**Key West Streetscape**  
It is not intended to replicate the developments on Key West on Big Pine Key; the latter has developed in a different direction from former, which has a more urban character. Nonetheless, some aspects of the Key West fabric may provide cues for guiding the future of the Big Pine Key corridor. This photo shows how vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians are given equal status in the public realm. Buildings establish the street edge and character via well-defined setbacks, pedestrian-scaled architectural details and a mix of uses.



**Key West Streetscape**  
This photo illustrates how, even with development built close to, or along, the street edge, it is still possible to achieve a rural streetscape character. Where gaps in development occur along the street edge, well-defined planting masses can extend and maintain that edge.



**Bridge Foreman's House, Pigeon Key**  
Built in 1916, this house was a standard home plan utilized by the Florida East Coast Railroad throughout Miami and the Keys. Its character is consistent with the original structures on Big Pine Key with its pitched roof, gable/dormer windows, and columned porch with wide awnings.



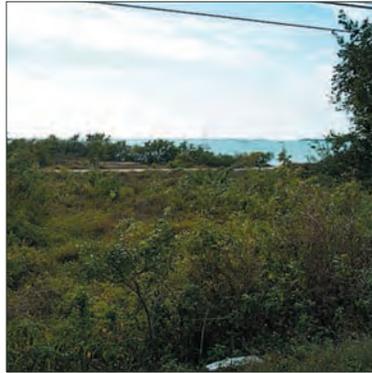
**Bridge Tender's House, Pigeon Key**  
The Tender's House is another original structure on Pigeon Key, dating back to 1912. The paint color is "Flagler Yellow", the official color of the Florida East Coast Railroad. The railed porches (front and rear) are a distinctive feature of the structure.

*Historic Photos and Big Pine Key Historical Data Credits: Jerry Wilkinson*

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**US 1/Key Deer Boulevard/Wilder Road/Chapman Street**  
The sole traffic signal on US 1 in Big Pine Key is located at the center of the corridor. The intersection is framed by several large establishments, including Eckerd, Scotty's, Century 21, and Mariner Bank. A shopping center and some institutional uses are located to the north. The center also houses some government uses, including the Key Deer Visitor's Center and the Public Library. Provisions for pedestrians are lacking; nonetheless, this area already functions as an informal core for Big Pine Key.



**US 1 at Cahill Pines and Palms/North Pine Channel**  
The western end of the US 1 corridor is flanked on either side by large tracts of conservation lands. The tract to the south is the site for a local swimming hole and was also recently cleared on exotic flora. There are dramatic views to North Pine Channel from both tracts as well as on the approach to the viaduct along US 1. The County recently obtained funding for landscape improvements to these tracts.



**US 1 at approach from Key Deer Habitat/Spanish Harbor**  
The approach on US 1 from the Spanish Harbor Channel runs through Key Deer habitat areas. The approach has been elevated to permit deer crossing beneath the highway. US 1 veers sharply to the west as it enters the Big Pine Key corridor. Opportunities are available for using currently vacant land at the northern end of this approach to create a feature that would terminate this vista as well as herald the entry into the main development corridor.



**Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center**  
The Visitors Center is located almost immediately after the entry into the main development corridor from the approach from the east. It unfortunately is located on the south side of US 1, and is not as visible nor easily accessible for visitors who are normally south/west-bound en route to Key West. Civic and community uses such as the Visitor Center are more suited to a central location along the corridor.



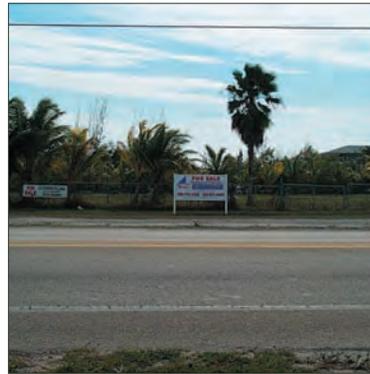
**Palmetto Avenue looking East**  
US 1 has a 180-foot R.O.W. at this portion of the corridor, though a large portion is taken up by parking for uses fronting the highway. This R.O.W. offers some spatial flexibility for traffic, parking and landscaping improvements. A concrete bicycle path is provided along the majority of the northern edge of US 1. The path, however, is unshaded and at times is illegally used by through traffic bypassing US 1. Same grade, north-south vehicular crossings between US 1 and the side streets/commercial parking lots also present safety issues to bicyclists.



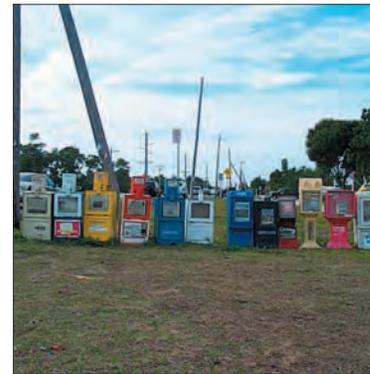
**Near US 1 and Sams Road**  
There are several establishments along the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor that, apart from serving local residents, possibly also cater to the larger Lower Keys area and through traffic bound for Key West. Unfortunately, some of these establishments are built with generic design and architectural treatments that are not fully in the context of Big Pine Key and detract from the desired image and character of the corridor.



**Near US 1 and 1st Street**  
Of the many commercial establishments along the corridor, some more than others reflect the built forms originally prevalent on Big Pine Key. Consistency and overall improvements to the streetscape could be achieved by a clear set of guidelines describing setbacks, building placement, architectural treatments and landscaping.



**US 1 and Lobstertail Road - East Cahill**  
There are a few vacant lots (non-conservation areas) on either side of the US 1 corridor. With improvements to service levels on US 1, these tracts provide the first opportunities for infill development and restructuring the corridor streetscape.



**US 1 near Key Deer Boulevard Looking East**  
Visual clutter is prevalent along US 1. These newspaper/periodical dispensers are a sample of the uncoordinated landscape/hardscape elements throughout the corridor. Moreover, they are not easily accessible, with residents having to drive their cars up onto the green buffer to get their paper.



**Northern Edge of US 1 near its intersection with Horvath Road**  
Several tracts along US 1 have been designated as conservation areas. This photo shows a hammock in the vicinity of Western edge of the corridor. The dense massing itself forms an edge to US 1 and is typical of the vegetation in the area.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



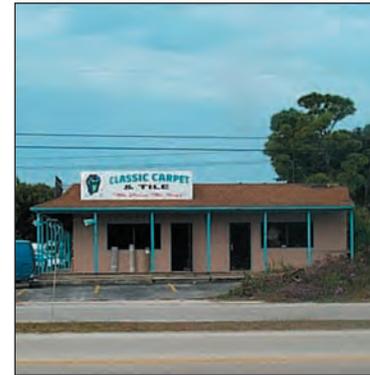
Civic or community buildings are strong contributors to an area's sense of place. These civic places become focal gathering places for the community. The Big Pine Key Post Office is a busy and highly utilized facility; nonetheless, it could benefit from a more prominent and centralized location that is accessible on foot as well as by car.



Commercial uses will be maintained along the corridor. Retail use is especially promoted and unique local shops are encouraged. The gable roof, wooden siding, porch, balcony and railings are authentic to the architecture of the island.



While not exactly in the traditional vernacular of Big Pine Key, the simplicity of this building is nonetheless a good example for development along the corridor. The low building fronted by retail, gable roof and uniformly proportioned signs create a harmonious façade to US 1.



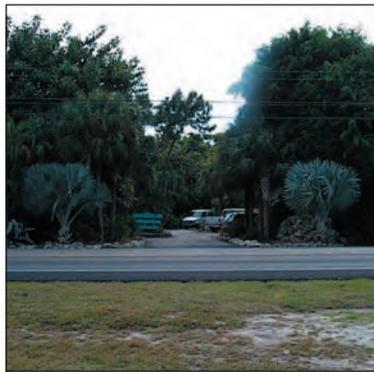
Canopies, awnings and porches are pedestrian friendly elements that are well-suited to commercial developments and should be emulated along the corridor. In addition, minimal parking is provided in the front of the building, with the majority of the spaces provided either to the side or at the rear.



The roofline, modulation and proportion of doors, windows and columns, and overall absence of excessive stylistic elements recall the traditional architecture on Big Pine Key, e.g. the old Big Pine Post Office.



Unique, "destination" shops contribute to the special character of the area. The architecture of this building is compatible with the Big Pine Key vernacular; and the signage is sensitively executed. While the current parking configuration (to the side of the building, not the van parked on the lawn) is acceptable, the building could have been improved with the shops actually facing US 1.



Even where the actual buildings are set back at a considerable distance from the highway, a semblance of a street edge is nonetheless created by the vegetative massing. However, it will be critical to delineate and differentiate private open space/green from public.



The western section of the corridor offers several vantage points for dramatic views to North Pine Channel. The rural landscape is intrinsic to the character of Big Pine Key and should be incorporated into the corridor proposals.



A parallel road along US 1 may help alleviate the traffic issues on the highway by segregating local vehicles from through traffic. Proposals will need to examine measures to mitigate the parallel roads being used by through traffic (as short cut/bypass routes) as well.



The Visitors Center's function is to promote the image of Big Pine Key and the Lower Keys. It is a use that potentially could be incorporated into a central civic facility for the island and itself contribute to this identity.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



Pedestrian use is currently discouraged along the corridor. The dominance of vehicular movement against the lack of provisions for pedestrians and their safety is prevalent. A sense of security and comfort is essential for the success of the public realm.



Vehicles dominate the frontage of many establishments along the corridor, creating hazards to cyclists and pedestrians. This is detrimental to a friendly neighborhood environment.



Vehicles illegally parked on the on the green buffer between the parallel road and US 1 are unsightly and damage the buffer. Parking is better provided to the side or behind developments which in turn should line the corridor.



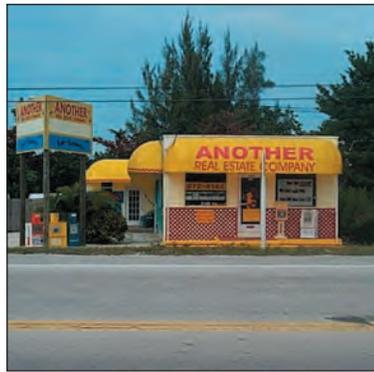
This building is set back too far from the corridor and the yard in front is too bare, obviously used solely for parking. These conditions do not contribute to the creation of a strong streetscape, but rather subtract from it.



Setting buildings too far back from the corridor creates indistinct spaces and do not contribute to a well-defined public realm. The plan and guidelines shall describe the appropriate building disposition for various uses and locations along the US 1 corridor.



Generic, strip mall architecture is the enemy of places desiring to have a unique image and character. In recent years, more and more large, national retailers are realizing the value of tailoring the planning and design of their establishments to the local context.



Local businesses are encouraged along the corridor. However, their appearance should conform to aesthetic criteria that contribute a harmonious image for Big Pine Key.



Uncoordinated, generic signage and street furniture contribute to the visual clutter along the corridor and detracts from the desired image of Big Pine Key. The guidelines shall include measures for coordinating various streetscape elements.



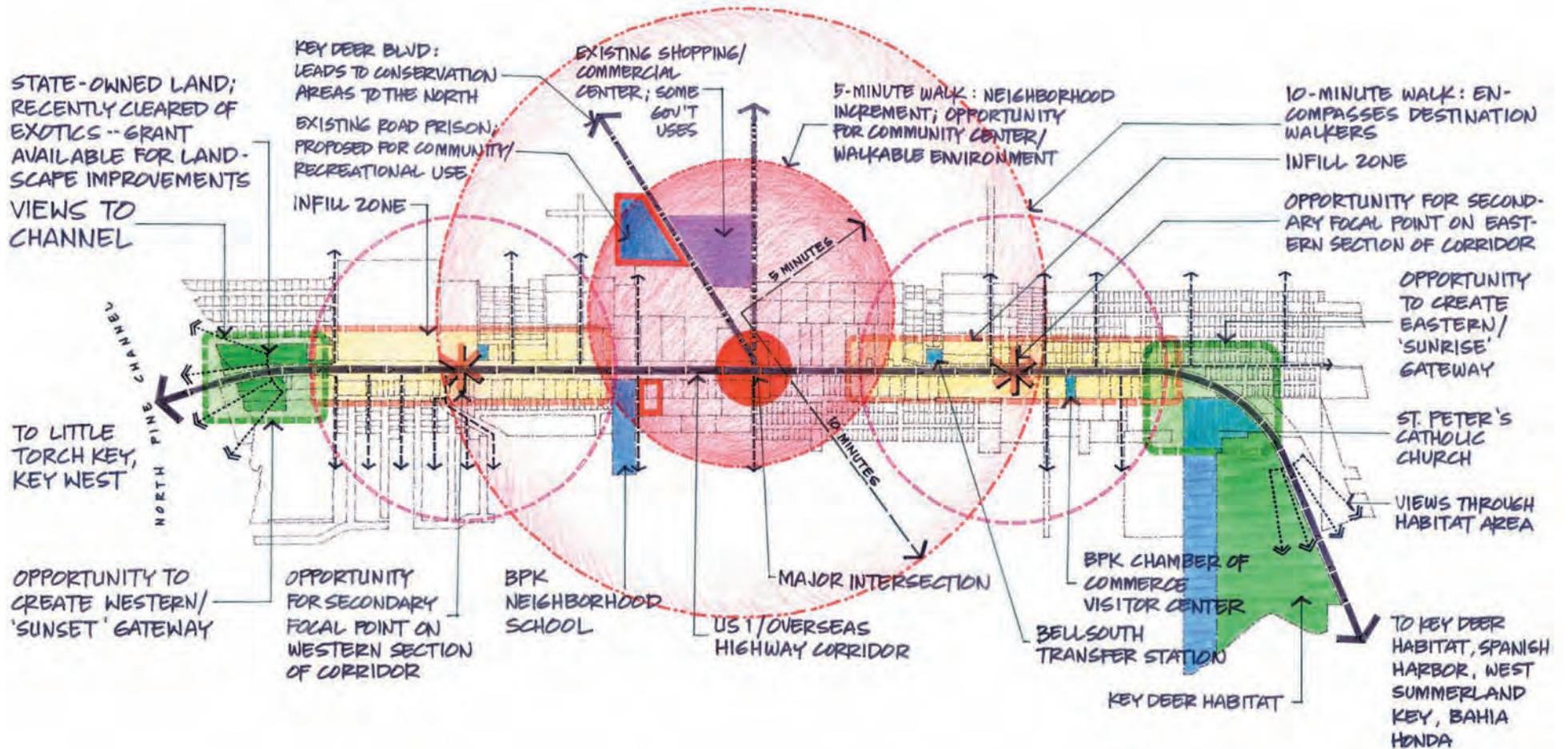
Parks, plazas, open spaces and other public areas are essential to the public realm and provide places for the community to gather and recreate. The underutilized green space at this intersection has the potential to be reshaped into an area of higher civic prominence, use and community significance.



The eastern and western sections of the Big Pine Key/US 1 corridor are currently mostly scrubland and do not create a sense of arrival and/or departure. With improved landscaping and pedestrian access, these tracts have the potential to be more prominent gateways into Big Pine Key, as well as special destinations for the community.

**THE VISION PLAN**

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



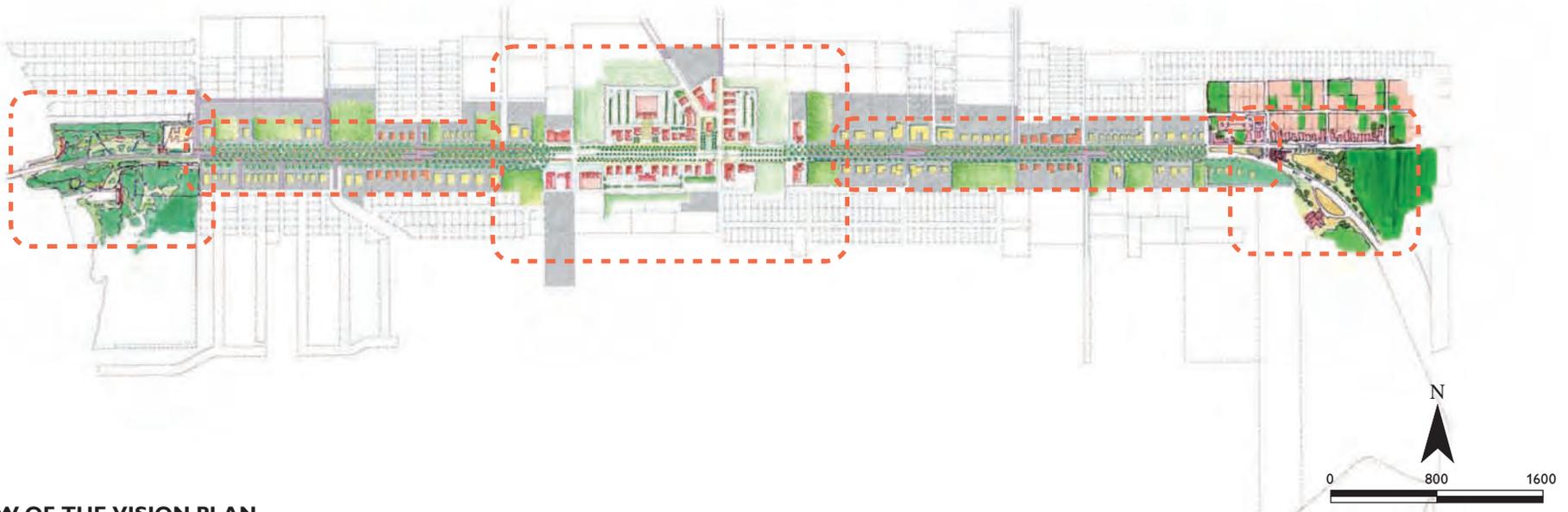
**OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

Due to the status of US 1 as a major thoroughfare and Big Pine Key's location as the northernmost of the Lower Keys, the corridor is rife with various opportunities for improved traffic management, revitalization, image building and revitalization.

The opportunities for gateways/portals and places of public interest exist at either end and at the center of the corridor. The tracts of land at the eastern and western sections of the US 1 corridor may be enhanced to define ingress and egress to/from the corridor

area. Meanwhile the center of the corridor may be enhanced as a new physical, civic center of the corridor and community. Portions along the corridor between these areas of special character provide opportunities for reinforcing the general development edges along US 1.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**OVERVIEW OF THE VISION PLAN**

**The East Park**

The East Park acts as a strong character gateway to meet the influx of Big Pine Key and Key West-bound traffic head-on and to help the transition from the long seven-mile bridge approach. The character of the East park emphasizes long view corridors and soft, native planting to match the long approach sequence.

**4th Street to West of Chambers Street**

The area between 4th Street and west of Chambers Street includes St. Peter's Catholic Church, a funeral home, cremation facility and cemetery; a couple of gas stations; a Bellsouth substation, a soft drink plant; the Big Pine Motel and the Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center. The right of way is 100 feet wide at this portion.

The redevelopment of properties to the proposed standards is desired for the long term. However, given the issues associated with re-provisioning those of the more "challenging" uses along this portion of US 1 (e.g. industrial, utility, crematorium and cemetery), it is anticipated that not all buildings may be redeveloped within the set planning horizon. As such, general, infill development is appropriate for this section of the corridor.

**The Village Center**

The area at the intersection of US 1, Key Deer Boulevard, Wilder Road and Chapman Street is the physical center of the corridor. No Name Key and the northern portions of Big Pine Key are largely accessed via this intersection. It is also currently the informal center of activity, with several major retail, commercial and community uses within a quarter mile.

**Loma Lane to Ships Way/West Cahill**

The area between Loma Lane and Ships Way/West Cahill has a more uniform character of commercial and retail development, including several unique, local shops. The right of way is 180 feet wide at this section. This allows enough room for proposed a parallel reverse flow side street arrangement to facilitate local eastbound traffic accessing these establishments from the western section of the corridor. As with the 4th Street-Chambers Street section, general, infill development is deemed appropriate for this section of the corridor. Some areas of wetland/hammocks are located close to the western end. These help the transition from this section to the western gateway/open space area.

**The West Park**

The West Park is a more activity based, resident-oriented public amenity. The park acts to buffer eastbound traffic on US 1 and help form a gateway to the unique Big Pine Key culture, it is also ideally located for water based activities and famous Key sunsets. The character of the West Park is more loose and naturalized and incorporates walking and biking trails with facilities for sunset viewing.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**Vision Plan Special Areas: The East Park**

Development of significant natural areas on US 1, intended to enhance the role of the Corridor on Big Pine Key, was explored in this study. The commonly held ideal of a more natural or 'green' corridor condition is supported with community parks anchoring the East and West ends of the island. These enhancements epitomize the nature and character of the island and give transition from the highway traffic of US 1 to the more measured pace of Big Pine Key.

Developing and refining an East Park gives the community an opportunity to present a strong character gateway. Facing the flow of west-bound traffic to Big Pine Key and through traffic to Key West; the park's frontage along US 1 can help visitors transition from Seven Mile Bridge and Spanish Harbor as they approach the main corridor area.

Components of the East Park, such as pavilions or shade structures can integrate the historic commercial and residential character of the island while keeping a small overall footprint. The park and enhanced corridor in general will also be a partner to the vital key deer areas and Conservation lands; appropriate positioning of park features will be important over time. The utilization of naturally occurring native plant species is also desirable in refining the character of the corridor. This is in consistent with the important native plants movement in many areas of the Florida Keys and South Florida.

Two options are presented for the East Park and are described in detail below.

Option 1

The environs of the proposed East Park lie within one of the key deer corridor areas extending through Sands subdivision. The boundaries of the key deer corridor area are defined in the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and development is discouraged within

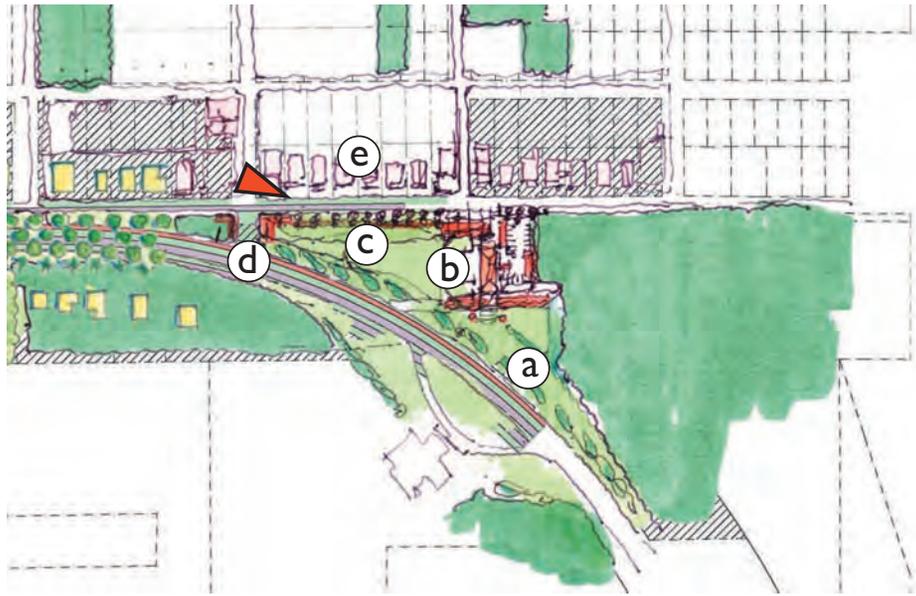


the deer corridor. The East Park is therefore envisioned as predominantly having a natural and passive quality. Nonetheless, it remains critical to maintain a gateway feature at the eastern portion and bookend the corridor, especially since this the "more important" of the two gateways, given that most visitors to Big Pine Key come from the north.

To this aim, it is proposed that a small portion of the westernmost tip of the park (where A Street meets US 1), be permitted for the development of an appropriate landmark/gateway feature. The majority of the park to the East is proposed to be given to open space, as suggested by the HCP. Details are as follows:

- a. The character of the East Park emphasizes long view corridors and soft, native planting to match the long approach sequence as US 1 bends toward the center corridor.
- b. A pavilion is proposed at the western point of the park, where A Street meets US 1. It is suggested that this structure be built in the Big Pine Key / Pigeon Key vernacular. The structure serves as a visual "pivot", terminating and redirecting views from both the southeastern approach and the western approach.
- c. Bracketed trellises form a physical 'gateway' for the East Park and connect the main corridor area, via a short trellis, with the pavilion and larger nature park and bordering the Key Deer habitat area to the East.
- d. The majority of the East Park is envisaged as a green area for passive recreation, in keeping with the Habitat Conservation Plan. The plantings are envisioned to include many of the native plant species on Big Pine Key.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

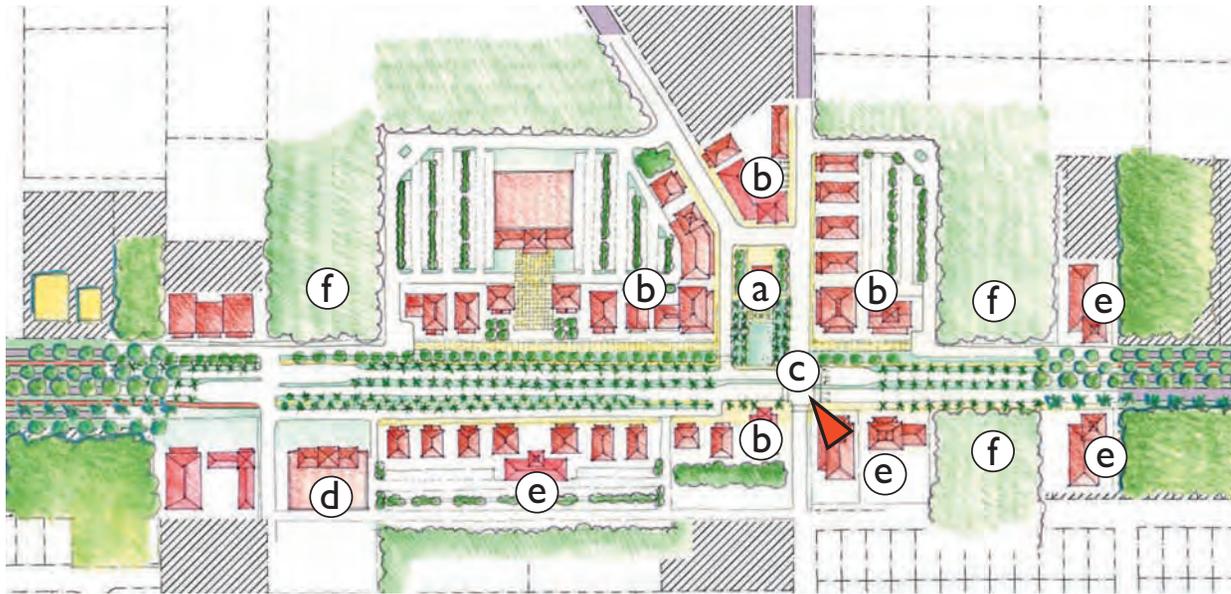


Option 2

The East Park would be the location for a more prominent community "welcome feature" setting the tone for an enhanced corridor and future revitalized village center:

- a. As with Option 1, soft planting is proposed along the approach on US 1 towards the main corridor:
- b. An appropriate structure is proposed at the head of the approach from the east, built in the Big Pine Key / Pigeon Key vernacular. The structure forms the visual terminus at the eastern end of the corridor as viewed from the West. The southern frontage also forms the terminated vista as viewed from the East.
- c. A long planted trellis would run parallel to a row of palms from the structure towards the main axis of the corridor. The Big Pine Key bike trail and pedestrian path would extend alongside the trellis and terminate within the Park.
- d. As with Option 1, bracketed trellises cap the eastern end of the US 1 Corridor, forming a gateway and marking the point the highway turns from the eastern approach into the actual corridor. This sheltering feature connects the main corridor area, via the linear trellis, with the larger park area off US 1 to the east.
- e. There are opportunities for the properties facing the East Park to be redeveloped and enhanced, employing the proposed Big Pine Key architectural vernacular. The low-impact, traditional character complements the park and supports the envisioned character of the corridor:

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**Vision Plan Special Areas: The Village Center**

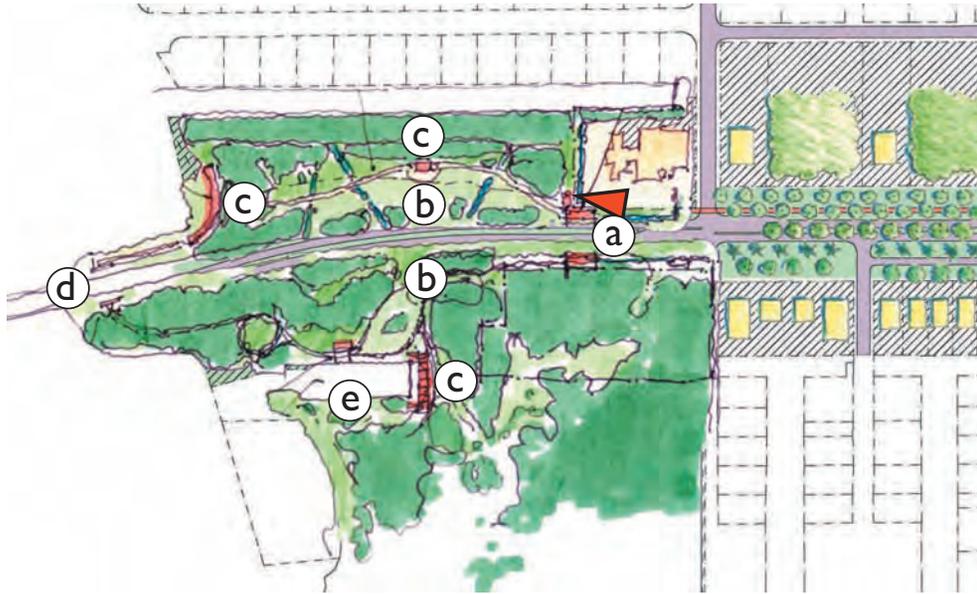
The area at the intersection of US 1, Key Deer Boulevard, Wilder Road and Chapman Street is the physical center of the corridor. No Name Key and the northern portions of Big Pine Key, including several residential communities and various nature/conservation reserves are largely accessed via this intersection. It is also currently the informal center of activity for the Big Pine Key Community, with several major retail, commercial and community uses within a quarter mile radius. The Big Pine Key Shopping Center is to the immediate north of the intersection, while the Flea Market and the Big Pine Neighborhood School are at the western edge. The Vision Plan shows how this position as the center may be strengthened as part of the overall image for Big Pine Key.

- a. Reconfiguration of the intersection, showing a new plaza and 4-way intersection at the traffic signal. The new arrangement resolves currently difficult circulation patterns at the intersection. Meanwhile, the plaza forms the center of a new Village Center with a landmark feature such as a small public building or formal statue as its focal point. The civic building may house the Post Office, the relocated Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, or a combination of these and other community facilities.
- b. Redevelopment of the commercial sites on the north-western corner of US 1 and Key Deer Boulevard (including Ecker and Scotty's), the office site north of the intersection (Marine Bank), the commercial and office sites on the north-eastern corner of US 1 and Wilder Road (including Century 21) and the site on the south-west corner of US 1 and Chapman Street. At each of the corners facing the plaza/intersection, building forms are proposed to help define the public space. Program for these buildings may include repositioning of current uses on these sites (the bank, for example, may be relocated to the same location at the head of the plaza/intersection). It is proposed that these buildings have ground floors devoted to retail use, while upper stories are assigned to office or live-work use. It becomes vital that these buildings comprise 2 or 3 stories and respond to the intent of creating a development focus for Big Pine Key along the corridor. It

will still be possible to accommodate a large format retail establishment within the Village Center. The building is proposed to be located towards the rear of the north-western corner of the Center. Parking is similarly proposed in the rear areas, between the retail pad and the developments fronting the plaza and away from the main corridor traffic. A community/civic building may occupy the site to the immediate south of the proposed plaza. This effectively bookends the intersection along its north-south alignment with civic uses.

- c. Safe pedestrian passage and visual aids. Providing clearly defined areas where pedestrians can cross is one of the main objectives of the Vision Plan. Special paving, and clearly marked crosswalks are all part of a design strategy that must be coordinated with vehicular flow concerns.
- d. Improvements to the Flea Market. The Flea Market is a cultural landmark on Big Pine Key. The present site, however, comprises several vacant lots. There is opportunity for a building to front the lot and anchor this corner site. This will extend the development edge along the corridor and serve as a permanent marquee for the market.
- e. Additional/Long-term infill development opportunities. In order to reinforce the desired character and scale of the fabric of this portion of the corridor, several sites are suggested as small-scale development opportunities.
- f. Existing Wetland/Hammocks/Conservation Areas. Minimal intervention is anticipated for these areas. The existing vegetative massing, supplemented by proposed landscaping along the US 1 right of way, is envisioned to extend the proposed development edge along the corridor.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**Vision Plan Special Areas: The West Park**

Similar to the proposed East Park, the West Park forms a gateway on the corridor. In this instance, however, it is largely an 'exit gateway' for traffic leaving Big Pine Key and heading further south to the rest of the Lower Keys. As such, it is also vital that a lasting final impression of Big Pine Key is left with departing visitors. As with East Park and the overall landscape enhancements along the corridor, naturally occurring native plant species are to be utilized.

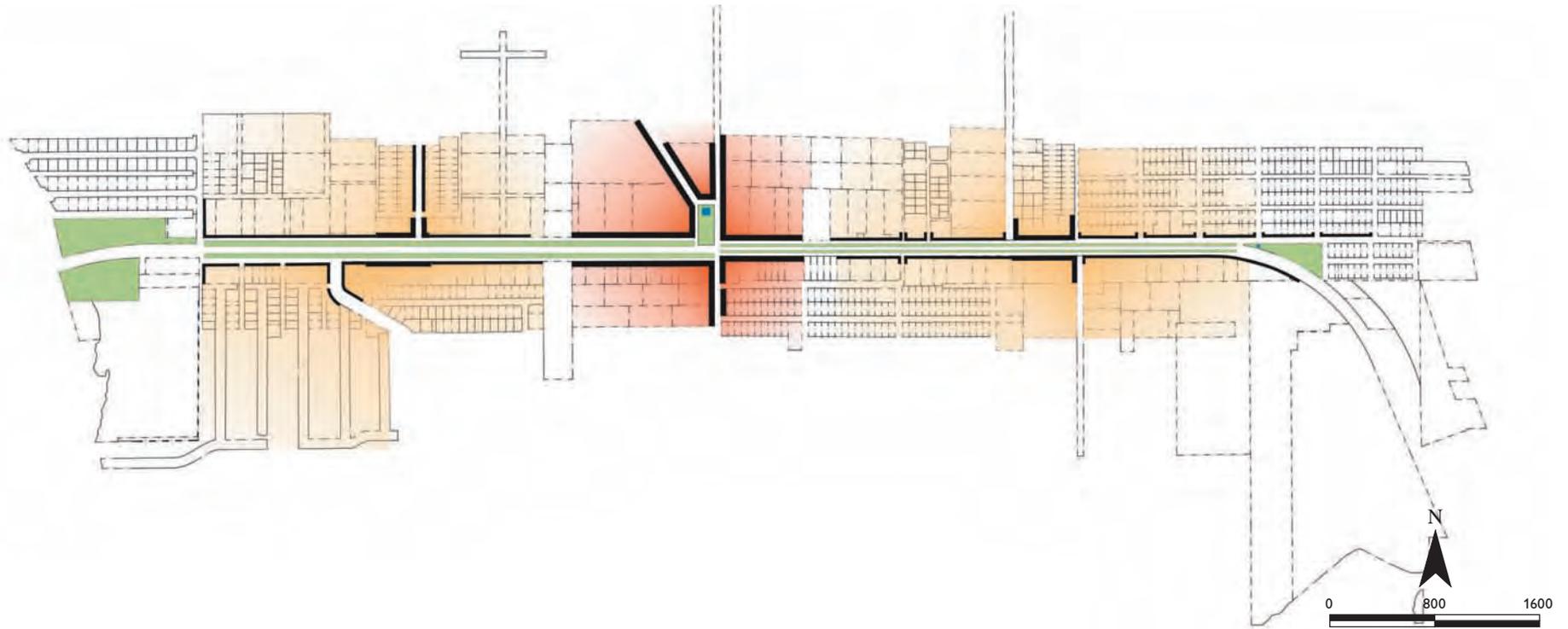
The West Park is a more activity-based, resident-oriented public amenity. Apart from serving as a buffer to eastbound traffic on US 1 and forming a gateway on this end of the corridor, the West Park is also ideally located for water based activities and famous Key sunsets.

- a. A double bracket trellis forms a gateway to the West Park. This mirrors the bracket trellises at the East Park; together, these park features anchor both ends of the US 1 through Big Pine Key, create finite visual boundaries and "bookend" the corridor with a unified image.
- b. The character of the West Park is loose and naturalized with hedgerows and tree rows which help to screen undesirable views of the highway traffic as well as screen and absorb vehicular noise.
- c. The park would be the western terminus for the enhanced Big Pine Key walking and biking trails with a development of shelters and public pavilions. A special arrangement is provided at the water's edge along North Pine Channel for viewing sunsets.

- d. The northern and southern portions of the West Park are connected via an extension of the enhanced biking and hiking trails through an underpass beneath US 1. This is located at the western tip of the park, past the proposed 'sunset viewing pavilion' and below where US 1 begins to rise in a viaduct to cross North Pine Channel.
- e. The West Park also includes a local secret: the Old Swimming Hole, which is located within a natural hammock area on the southern edge of US 1. It is an area that is not readily noticeable from the highway. Under these proposals, access to this feature from the areas north of the highway is envisioned to be via the underpass described above and may be integrated with the enhanced biking and walking trails on both sides of the highway. There would be special emphasis on new rest and shade pavilions appropriately positioned at the old swimming hole and along the trails as a gateway to the park.

**PLAN DIAGRAMS**

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

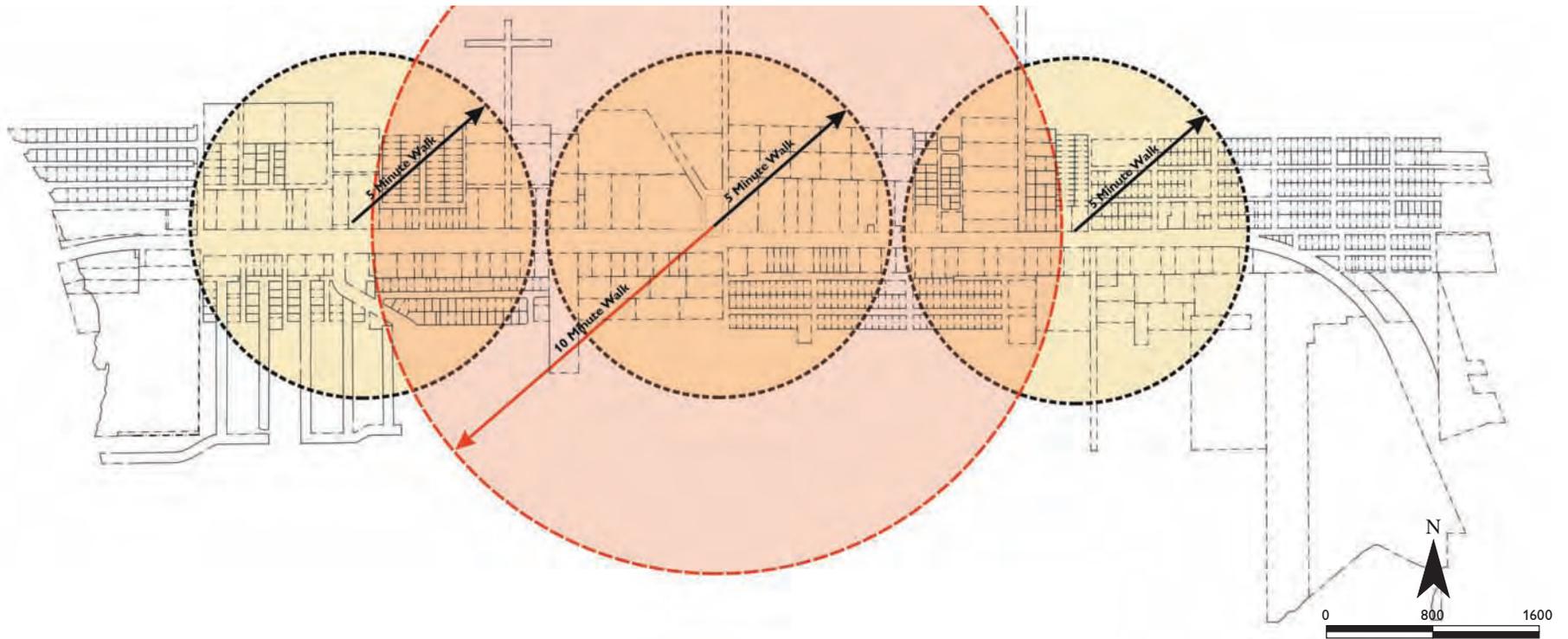


**Neighborhood Structure**

The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Vision Plan includes an area of intense mixed-use ("Center") and areas with an overall, homogenous development fabric ("General"). The center of the Vision Plan is where civic buildings are sited, as devices of orientation and community image. There is a necessity to place uses and building types appropriately within the Transect Zones; the neighborhood structure diagram is an illustration of the character of the neighborhood. This diagram also reflects the areas that should be given the most focus in terms of increased density, activity and variety.

The Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area's center is located at its physical center; the intersection of US 1, Key Deer Boulevard, Wilder Road and Chapman Street. The general zones extend from the center toward the eastern and western boundaries of the corridor.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

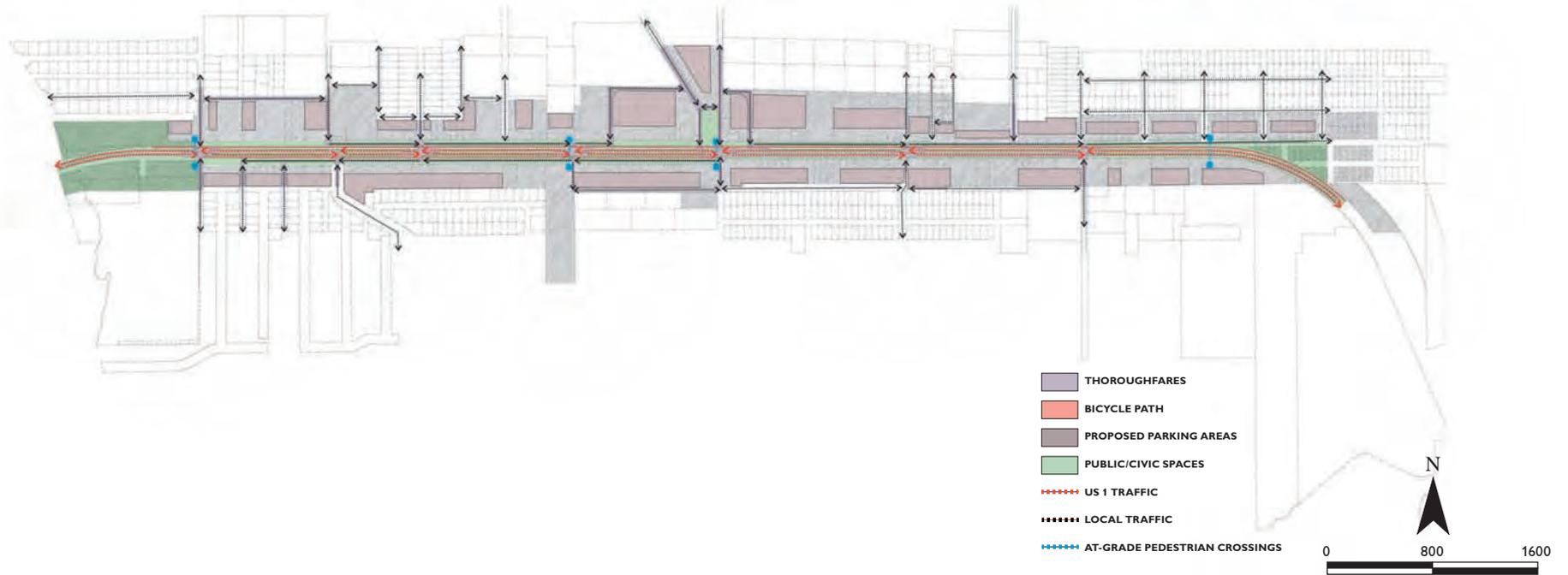


**Five Minute Walk/Pedestrian Shed**

The Vision Plan has been prepared in part on the basis of the Pedestrian Shed - an area covered by a circle that has a radius of 1350 feet or a quarter mile (the area covered by this pedestrian shed is often referred to as a "neighborhood"). This is the distance that can be covered by a five-minute walk at a moderate pace; it is regarded as the maximum distance a person will willingly walk before opting to drive. It should be noted that this five-minute walk must be enjoyable in order for people to choose walking over driving. In the best examples of traditional development, the pedestrian shed accommodates most of the needs of daily activities, reducing dependence on areas outside the neighborhood for most residents. The pedestrian shed can be expanded to a half-mile radius with the provision of alternative modes of circulation, such as cycling.

The diagram shows that the corridor can effectively be divided into three sheds or neighborhoods. The center of the main five- and ten-minute pedestrian sheds is located at the intersection of US 1 and Key Deer Boulevard. The proposed Village Center is located entirely within the pedestrian shed. The secondary pedestrian sheds are centered at the eastern and western General zones.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

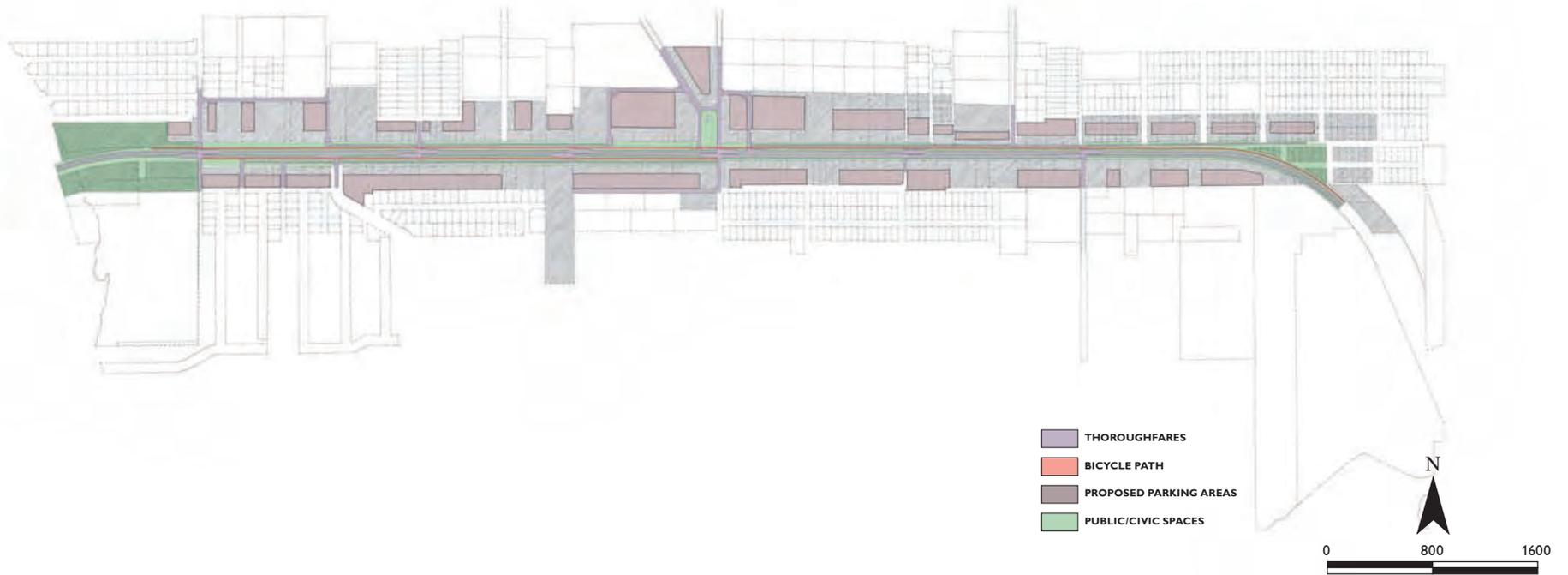


**Circulation and Parking**

At least four modes of circulation are distributed throughout the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area. These comprise through traffic on US 1, local vehicular movement, bicycle circulation and pedestrian movement. Interfaces between through traffic and the latter three modes present the greatest challenges to an efficient and safe circulation network. Local circulation is proposed to be segregated from through traffic via the introduction of reverse flow lanes running parallel to US 1; this is described at greater length in the Traffic and Transportation section of this document. Elevated bike and pedestrian trails are integrated with enhanced landscaping to serve as a buffer between US 1 and the local reverse flow road. The bicycle and pedestrian pathways themselves extend to the eastern and western edges of the corridor, terminating at the two gateway parks. North-south bicycle and pedestrian crossings are provided at the Village Center and at the West Park.

Curbside parking is provided along the reverse flow streets, fronting the commercial uses lining the corridor. In addition, parking is also proposed to be provided behind the establishments along US 1; in this manner, a more continuous commercial frontage may be brought as close to the street edge as possible.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**Thoroughfare Network**

The thoroughfare network is hierarchical, ranging from the main US 1 roadway, to the local parallel access roads, to local distributor roads branching off from the corridor. The street hierarchy corresponds with elements and properties that characterize the nature of traffic moving on each thoroughfare type. These elements include, but are not limited to, right-of way, sidewalk width, parking provision, plantings, etc.. This system will insure, for instance, that a street intended to be lined with shops provides relatively slower-moving traffic away from the through traffic, wide sidewalks, trees that shade but do not block signage, parking, etc..

Each thoroughfare is designed to be used by the appropriate mode of transportation and with the understanding that thoroughfares are apart of the public realm. As such, the streets, even the main US 1 corridor, must be both functional and beautiful.

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



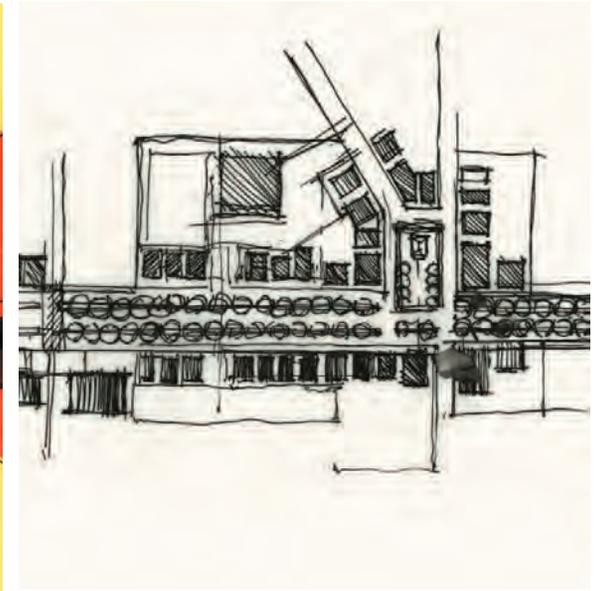
**Public and Civic Buildings and Spaces**

Public and civic buildings and spaces are the areas/structures in the Vision Plan that can be accessed by the general community and can house a number of amenities or community facilities. Public spaces provided along the corridor comprise the Village Center plaza, the East Park and the West Park. These spaces are punctuated by civic buildings and structures that serve as landmarks and vista terminations along the corridor. The public and civic buildings and spaces play an integral role in the layout, character an image of the corridor.

The framework of public and civic spaces and spaces assists in the organization and scale of the corridor into identifiable segments, each with its own community image or character. The parks at either end of the Study Area anchors the corridor; integrates it with the larger context of the Big Pine Key open space network and opens the corridor to excellent vistas to the east and west. The public space and buildings at the center of the US 1 becomes the physical, functional, and visual center for the community.

## TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan



**THE VILLAGE CENTER**

**Observation**

Pedestrians in the corridor feel uncomfortable both crossing US 1 and moving to and from the surrounding streets. One key reason for this discomfort is the high speed of US 1 traffic. Traffic is delayed by the traffic signals; sometimes for half a mile. When the red signal turns green, drivers are tempted to rush to reach the next island, at higher than the posted speed.

In addition, commercial activity along US 1 is highly auto oriented and strung out, east/west, along most of the island. Often it is too far to comfortably walk from one destination to another.

**Discussion**

To address problems of excessive traffic speed, excessive volume, and limited walkability, a key long range goal (even 10 years, given the rate of growth policies) of the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan should be to concentrate commercial activities within a Village Center. This center would produce more walking trips among residents who live within one-quarter mile of the square as well as promoting more walking trips among those customers who drive to the commercial district and park on the periphery.

**Recommendations**

1. Adopt a Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan that encourages development of a Village Center.
2. Amend the Monroe County Land Development Code to allow Village Center development as recommended in the Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan.